



Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

— *Lee Holloway* —
Chairman of the Board

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For Immediate Release

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**CHAIRMAN HOLLOWAY STATEMENT ON POTENTIAL PRIVATIZATION
OF GENERAL MITCHELL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

Privatization could lead to higher fares, parking costs for passengers

Milwaukee, WI – Milwaukee County Board Chairman Lee Holloway released the following statement in response to the County Executive's proposal to privatize General Mitchell International Airport:

"The County Board will consider any privatization plan the County Executive formally introduces, but the proof will be in the details. The airport uses no property tax dollars in its operation and all revenues generated from passengers and airlines are used to maintain and improve the airport. A private operator, however, would keep profits and could put additional cost burdens on both passengers and airlines, which cannot sustain additional financial obligations in the current environment of rising fuel prices. I am also concerned about a plan that does not provide safeguards for property tax payers in the event that privatization would fail.

"Much of Mitchell Airport's success in attracting record numbers of flights and passengers in recent years is due to the affordability of fares and parking at the airport, as well as the flexible flight schedules offered at Mitchell. The County Executive's suggestion that Milwaukee County transfer operation of the airport to a private operator, which would require federal approval, could lead to reduced flight schedules, increased parking costs and higher fares for users of the airport. If increased fees are placed on travelers, I will consider them to be a new tax.

"As the County Executive ignores calls from the business community for a tax shift to support mass transit, the County Board is considering a plan to remove the transit funding burden from local property tax payers and shift the cost to a small increase in the sales tax. About a third of sales tax revenues come from visitors who do not pay Milwaukee County property taxes, but take advantage of the County's many attractions. This property tax reduction, combined with shifting Parks funding from the property tax to a sales tax, would take our property tax levy down to levels we haven't seen since the late 1990s."

Last year, readers of Condé Nast Traveler magazine voted Mitchell International Airport, owned and operated by Milwaukee County, fourth best airport in the nation and #1 for ease of connections.